

The Culture of Trust in the Countries of the Visegrad Group

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A MAGYAR REGIONÁLIS TUDOMÁNYI TÁRSASÁG XX. VÁNDORGYŰLÉSE

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The importance and novelty of
the topic

The measurability and
measurement of trust

Methodology

Findings, results

Conclusions



CONTENT

The importance and novelty of the topic

- Unpredictability and acceleration of the world
 - The frequency of interactions
 - The need for cooperation
 - Since the cultural turn of the last century, it is an accepted theoretical development that social processes are geographically determined.
- } enhanced the study and analysis of trust in the scientific field

However, the question arises whether the traditions of deep-seated mistrust in Central and Eastern European countries have dissolved since the dissolution of the socialist bloc or they still belong to the group of low-trust cultures.

- Novelty: the current level of trust and its changes are identified and compared between the four countries based on secondary data in three different aspects: inferential indicators, behavioural indicators, and verbal indicators by surveys and opinion polls.
- Aspect of the selection of the four countries

The measurability and measurement of trust

- Soft factor → difficult to measure and operationalize
- Two schools of trust
 - trust is an individual trait
 - trust as a social phenomenon, a specific characteristic of social systems → **the measurement of trust ‘must be statistically linked to social variables’.**

- **Inferential, indirect indicators** are measurement options that have been proven by previous studies to be related to the level of trust.
- **Behavioural indicators** represent the actual or intended behaviour of individuals.
- **Verbal indicators** express the opinion of members of society.

Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wars and occupations - Crises - Political systems 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economy - Geographic features - External shaping forces, territorial planning 		
	Politics		Society		Economy	
Present and future expectations	Inferential indicators					
	Political system , form of government Corruption Nepotism An independent court Ethnic homogeneity, minority policy State intervention		Networks Personal qualities (optimism, openness, honesty, loyalty) Cultural characteristics		GDP, wealth Degree of inequality Universal / selective welfare care Unemployment Enterprise size Voluntary organizations	
	Behavioural indicators					
	Spread of self-defence and protective measures Consumer behaviour Participation or absence from public life Amount of protest events			Vision of future, housing construction Emigration Existence of savings Preferred method for saving		
	Verbal indicators using surveys and polls					
	Evaluation of political reforms Trust in political and state institutions		Future plans Support for foreign orientation Comparison of current and past situation General trust Relational trust Stereotype		Evaluation of economic reforms Trust in economic institutions	

Source: The author's own compilation based on Fukuyama (1995); Sztompka (1999); Delhey–Newton (2013), 2022.

- **Secondary research** to describe the level of trust in the four countries and to outline the trends
- **The sources of the data:**
 - the data of cultural researchers (e.g. Hofstede)
 - parts of the World Values Survey
 - Eurobarometer
 - Other researches investigating trust
 - Other data (for example, election participation data)
- **The aim of the research is to prove the following preliminary assumptions:**
 - The general trust level of the four countries examined is similar, thanks to their comparable historical background and culture.
 - The level of trust in the four countries is inconstant, fluctuating, but shows an increasing trend.
 - The level of trust is closely related to economical, political and social phenomena, and can be measured at all three levels.

Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Wars and occupations</i> - <i>Crises</i> - <i>Political systems</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Economy</i> - <i>Geographic features</i> - <i>External shaping forces, territorial planning</i>
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- 'Trust, like all other cultural [...] ingredients, is treated as a product of accumulated historical experiences' (Sztompka, 1999, 152)
- Czech Republic stands out from its Eastern European peers, because the Czech society was more industrialized, not to mention more optimistic.
- 'Distrust is a pervasive legacy of communist rule' (Rose, 1994, 18).

Slow rebuilding of trust:

- The transition is continuous
- The economic growth and a significant improvement in the quality of life
- The possibility of shopping, foreign trips, entertainment and leisure opportunities
- The expansion of personal and social capital
- The change of generations
- Joining the Western alliances

- **Political system:** Democracy
- Freedom House:
 - Czech Republic and Slovakia: consolidated **democracies**,
 - Poland: semi-consolidated democracy,
 - Hungary: transitional or hybrid regime.
- Negative correlation between trust and **corruption**.
- Transparency International: Hungary achieved the worst result among the four countries, followed by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and finally Poland.

Inferential indicators		
Political system , form of government Corruption Nepotism An independent court Ethnic homogeneity, minority policy State intervention	Networks Personal qualities (optimism, openness, honesty, loyalty) Cultural characteristics	GDP, wealth Degree of inequality Universal / selective welfare care Unemployment Enterprise size Voluntary organizations

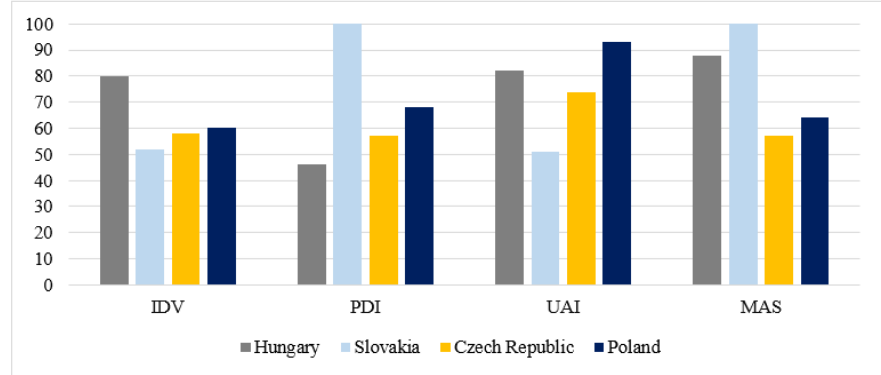
- GDP per capita: the countries' **GDP** per capita shows a **trend-like increase**. Czech Republic performs the best, followed by Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.
- **Unemployment rate:** each of the four countries examined has a low unemployment rate below the European Union average.

Findings and results – Inferential indicators

- **PDI:** the level of trust in Slovakia is the lowest, followed by Poland and Czech Republic
- **IDV:** all four countries are mostly individualistic, which means a universal trust
- **UAI:** with the exception of Slovakia the other three countries are low-trust societies
- **MAS:** it confirms the mistrust of the four countries

Interesting fact: Gesteland (2012) puts Slovakia and Poland closer to the Russian culture and classifies the countries in one group.

Diagram 1: The cultural values of the examined countries based on Hofstede's four dimensions



Source: The author's own compilation based on Hofstede – Hofstede (2008), 2022.

PDI	in cultures with a small power distance, people are mostly equal, so they trust each other
IDV	the core value of an individualistic culture is universalism, i.e. everyone can be trusted
UAI	trust is lower in highly uncertainty-avoidant cultures
MAS	masculine societies do not agree with the statement 'most people are trustworthy'

- Analysing emigration data, according to Eurostat, significant growth can be seen in the case of Hungary, while stagnation can be seen in the case of the other three countries.

Behavioural indicators	
Spread of self-defence and protective measures	Vision of future, housing construction
Consumer behaviour	Emigration
Participation or absence from public life	Existence of savings
Amount of protest events	Preferred method for saving

- In terms of participation in public life, **Hungary performed the best**, although the participation rate of the four countries is almost the same.
- Considering the trends of the parliamentary elections, Hungary has shown a slight improvement since 1990, with minor declines in some years.
- However, in the case of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland, a **significant decline** can be seen.

- **World Values Survey**

- Limitations of the analysis: there was only one data collection period (1995-1998) in which all four countries were examined.
- **‘in general, most people can be trusted’**
- The results of the four countries are very similar.
- Poland agrees with the statement the least, while the Czech Republic the most, but only with 28.5%.

Verbal indicators using surveys and polls		
Evaluation of political reforms Trust in political and state institutions	Future plans Support for foreign orientation Comparison of current and past situation General trust Relational trust Stereotype	Evaluation of economic reforms Trust in economic institutions

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- ‘Recent decades have been characterized by observers as a period of ‘crisis of trust’ in European societies’
- **What happened to the four countries whose trust was already low due to their historical traditions?**
- The tradition of mistrust of socialist rule can be clearly determined.
- Many factors → strengthened trust in these societies, which thus began to grow.
- The building of trust is visible, but they can still be classified in the group of low-trust cultures.
- From the comparison of the four countries, the **Czech Republic stands out** as the country with the highest level of trust, while the lowest level of trust can be measured in Poland and Hungary based on indirect, behavioral and verbal indicators.
- However, there is **little difference between the trust levels of the four countries.**
- The analysis was mainly limited by
 - the lack of uniform data
 - the study did not take into account which of the indicators show a strong or less significant relationship with trust
 - ignored that different demographic factors can somewhat shade the picture

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**Thank you for Your
attention!**

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